

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAGOS 05953 01 OF 02 121611Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----084008 121616Z /43

R 121455Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8419

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 5953

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS-XGDS 1
TAGS: PGOV, NI
SUBJECT: THE POLITICS OF POPULATION: THE RURAL NORTH

REF: (A) LAGOS 5201, (B) LAGOS 4110, (C) LAGOS 4020,
(D) LAGOS 3751, (E) LAGOS 3302

1. IN A MAY 9 CONVERSATION WITH AN EMBASSY OFFICER,
A VISITING WORLD BANK OFFICIAL TOLD US IN STRICTEST
CONFIDENCE THAT WORLD BANK STATISTICS INDICATE
THAT THE POPULATION IN RURAL PARTS OF NORTHERN
NIGERIA IS IN FACT ONLY ABOUT 60 PERCENT OF THE
OFFICIAL POPULATION ESTIMATES USED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

2. THE OFFICIAL WAS IN NIGERIA TO MONITOR PROGRESS
AT WORLD BANK AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS
AT FUNTUA (KADUNA STATE), GUSAU (SOKOTO) AND
GOMBE (BAUCHI) WHICH THE BANK CONSIDERS TO BE
HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL OPERATIONS. THEY ARE ALL MULTI-
HUNDRED MILLION DOLLAR PROJECTS AIMED AT DEVELOPING
BOTH CASH AND FOOLD CROPS IN GEIOGRAPHICALLY EXTEN-
SIVE AREAS. ON THE BASIS OF THEIR SUCCESS, THE
FMG HAS ASKED THE BANK TO EXPAND ITS MORE RECENT
PROJECTS AT LAFIA (PLATEAU) AND AYANGBA (BENUE)
AND TO INSTITUTE PROJECTS AT BIDA (NIGER),
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ILORIN (KWARA) AND A STATEWIDE PROJECT IN KANO.

3. ACCORDING TO THE OFFICIAL, IT IS ESSENTIAL
THAT THE BANK HAVE ACCURATE POPULATION FIGURES
FOR THE PROJECT AREAS BECAUSE EACH PROJECT IS
DESIGNED TO HAVE A CATALYTIC DEVELOPMENTAL IMPACT
IN THE AREA. THEREFORE, CAREFUL DEMOGRAPHIC

SURVEYS DIRECTED BY EXPATRIATE PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT IN THE THREE NORTHERN PROJECTS, IN EACH CASE, IT WAS DISCOVERED THAT ONLY ABOUT 60 PERCENT AS MANY PEOPLE LIVE IN THE AREA COMPARED TO THE FMG'S POPULATION PROJECTIONS, WHICH ARE AN EXTRAPOLATION FROM 1963 CENSUS DATA. FOR EXAMPLE, ACCORDING TO THE CENSUS DATA, IN 1963 844,762 PEOPLE LIVED IN THE FORMER DANJA-KOGO, MASKA, MALUMFASHI AND MUSAWA-KANKARA FEDERAL ELECTORAL CONSTITUENCIES, AND AREA WHICH IS APPROXIMATELY CONTIGUOUS WITH THE PRESENT DAY FUNTUA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA (LGA) IN KADUNA STATE. ACCORDING TO WORLD BANK DATA THERE ARE IN FACT ABOUT THAT NUMBER OF PEOPLE NOW LIVING IN THE LGA, FAR LESS THAN WHAT THE GOVERNMENT PROJECTS.

4. WORLD BANK OFFICIAL SAID THAT THE FMG IS AWARE THAT THE BANK HAS MADE THE SURVEYS AND IS "VERY SENSITIVE" ABOUT THE RESULTS FOR OBVIOUS POLITICAL REASONS. AS A RESULT, THE DATA IS HANDLED ON AN EXTREMELY RESTRICTED BASIS WITHIN THE BANK, AND THE QUESTION OF SURVEYS IS A "PROBLEM" IN NEGOTIATING THE NEW PROJECTS WITH THE FMG. THE OFFICIAL SPECULATED THAT THE FMG, ALTHOUGH UNHAPPY, WILL ACCEPT THEM BECAUSE OPERATION FEED THE NATION IS SUCH A "DISASTER"

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AND THE FMG FEELS IT NEEDS THE BANK.

5. COMMENT: POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS ARE NOTORIOUSLY UNRELIABLE IN NIGERIA. THE DISCREPANCY MAY REFLECT INACCURACIES DATING BACK TO THE 1963 CENSUS OR BEFORE, ALTHOUGH IT IS DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT THE SAME STATISTICAL ERROR WOULD APPEAR IN THREE DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS. IT UNDOUBTEDLY REFLECTS POOR STATISTICAL ANALYSIS IN EXTRAPOLATING POPULATION STATISTICS FROM THE 1963 CENSUS. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE POPULATION STATISTICS WERE DEVELOPED BY PROJECTING THE NATIONAL POPULATION BASED ON THE RATE OF ANTICIPATED POPULATION INCREASE RATE AND APPLYING THIS ACROSS THE BOARD TO ALL GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS. NO EFFORT WAS MADE TO COMPENSATE FOR BIRTH RATE VARIATIONS BY AREA OR TO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LAGOS 5953

EXDIS

ACCOUNT FOR THE CONINUING MOVEMENT FROM RURAL TO URBAN AREAS WHICH WAS UNDOUBTEDLY COMPOUNDED IN THE NORTH BY THE SAHELIAN DROUGHT. THUS, IT MAY SIMPLY MEAN NORTHERN CITIES ARE LARGER AND THE RURAL AREAS MORE UNDERPOPULATED THAN BELIEVED.

6. NEVERTHELESS, THE DISCREPANCY RAISES SERIOUS AND EXPLOSIVE POLITICAL-QUESTIONS. FIRST, WE NOTE THAT THE NEW LEGISLATIVE CONSTITUENCIES ARE BEING DRAWN UP BASED ON THE 1963 CENSUS. THESE ARE BEING GERRYMANDERED, AS REPORTED REF A, AND PEOPLE HAVE GENERALLY ACCEPTED THE FACT THAT URBAN AREAS WILL TEND TO BE UNDERREPRESENTED BECAUSE OF POPULATION MOVEMENT. HOWEVER, SINCE THIS REPORT RAISES A QUESTION AS TO THE ACCURACY OF THE 1963 CENSUS, IT SUGGESTS THAT AT A MINIMUM THE RURAL NORTH, IF NOT THE NORTH IN GENERAL, WILL BE SERIOUSLY OVERREPRESENTED IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

7. SECONDLY, IT WILL BE RECALLED THAT THE RECENTLY COMPLETED VOTER REGISTRATION CAMPAIGN WHICH REGISTERED 20 PERCENT MORE VOTERS THAN ANTICIPATED FOUND 52 PERCENT OF THE VOTERS IN THE NORTH. IF THESE VOTER REGISTRATION FIGURES CORRESPOND PROPORTIONATELY WITH ACROSS THE BOARD PROJECTIONS OF POPULATION WITHIN
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STATES, THEN IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THERE MAY HAVE BEEN SERIOUS WIDESPREAD OVER-REGISTRATION IN THE RURAL NORTH.

8. FINALLY, SOUTHERNERS HAVE LONG DOUBTED THE REPORTED LARGE NORTHERN POPULATION. THIS FEELING

REFLECTS TRADITIONAL ETHNIC AND REGIONAL RIVALRIES
AND IS THE SOURCE OF THE POLITICAL STORM WHICH SURROUNDS
ANY CENSUS IN NIGERIA. IF SIGNIFICANT POPULATION
DISCREPANCIES WERE TO COME TO LIGHT, WHETHER OR NOT
THEY ARE IN CONNECTION WITH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CON-
STITUENCIES OR REGISTRATION OF VOTERS, IT WOULD PRESENT
SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR THE GOVERNMENT, WHICH HAS
ALREADY WEATHERED A BITTER NORTH/SOUTH POLITICAL
STORM OVER THE SHARIA ISSUE.

9. IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE HOW MANY "VOTERS"
WERE REGISTERED IN THESE THREE AREAS WHEN THE FEDERAL
ELECTORAL COMMISSION RELEASES ITS STATISTICS BY
LGA LATER THIS YEAR. END COMMENT.
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